



Loyalty

Josiah Royce

Suppose a being whose social conformity has been sufficient to enable him to learn many skilful social arts, arts of speech, of prowess in contest, of influence over other men. Suppose that these arts have at the same time awakened this man's pride, his self-confidence, his disposition to assert himself. Such a man will have in him a good deal of what you can well call social will. He will be no mere anarchist. He will have been trained into much obedience. He will be no natural enemy of society, unless, indeed, fortune has given him extraordinary opportunities to win his way without scruples. On the other hand, this man must acquire a good deal of self-will. He becomes fond of success, of mastery, of his own demands. To be sure, he can find within himself no one naturally sovereign will. He can so far find only a general determination to define some way of his own, and to have his own way. Hence the conflicts of social will and self-will are inevitable, circular, endless, so long as this is the whole story of the man's life. By merely consulting convention, on the one hand, and his disposition to be somebody, on the other hand, this man can never find any one final and consistent plan of life, nor reach any one definition of his duty.

But now suppose that there appears in this man's life some one of the greater social passions, such as patriotism well exemplifies. Let his country be in danger. Let his elemental passion for conflict hereupon fuse with his brotherly love for his own countrymen into that fascinating and blood-thirsty form of humane but furious ecstasy, which is called the war-spirit. The mood in question may or may not be justified by the passing circumstances. For that I now care not. At its best the war-spirit is no very clear or rational state of anybody's mind. But one reason why men may love this spirit is that when it comes, it seems at once to define a plan of life, a plan which solves the conflicts of self-will and conformity. This plan has two features: (1) it is through and through a social plan, obedient to the general will of one's country, submissive; (2) it is through and through an exaltation of the self, of the inner man, who now feels glorified through his sacrifice, dignified in his self-surrender, glad to be his country's servant and martyr, yet sure that through this very readiness for self-destruction he wins the rank of hero.

Well, if the man whose case we are supposing gets possessed by some such passion as this, he wins for the moment the consciousness of what I call loyalty. This loyalty no longer knows anything about the old circular conflicts of self-will and of conformity. The self, at such moments, looks indeed outwards for its plan of life. "The country needs me," it says. It looks, meanwhile, inwards for the inspiring justification of this plan. "Honor, the hero's crown, the soldier's death, the patriot's devotion these," it says, "are my will. I am not giving up this will of mine. It is my pride, my glory, my self-assertion, to be ready at my country's call." And now there is no conflict of outer and inner.

How wise or how enduring or how practical such a passion may prove, I do not yet consider. What I point out is that this war-spirit, for the time at least, makes self-sacrifice seem to be self-expression, makes obedience to the country's call seem to be the proudest sort of display of one's own powers. Honor now means submission, and to obey means to have one's way. Power

and service are at one. Conformity is no longer opposed to having one's own will. One has no will but that of the country.

As a mere fact of human nature, then, there are social passions which actually tend to do at once two things: (1) to intensify our self-consciousness, to make us more than ever determined to express our own will and more than ever sure of our own rights, of our own strength, of our dignity, of our power, of our value; (2) to make obvious to us that this our will has no purpose but to do the will of some fascinating social power. This social power is the cause to which we are loyal.

Loyalty, then, fixes our attention upon some one cause, bids us look without ourselves to see what this unified cause is, shows us thus someone plan of action, and then says to us, "In this cause is your life, your will, your opportunity, your fulfillment."

Thus loyalty, viewed merely as a personal attitude, solves the paradox of our ordinary existence, by showing us outside of ourselves the cause which is to be served, and inside of ourselves the will which delights to do this service, and which is not thwarted but enriched and expressed in such service.

I have used patriotism and the war-spirit merely as a first and familiar illustration of loyalty. But now, as we shall later see, there is no necessary connection between loyalty and war; and there are many other forms of loyalty besides the patriotic forms. Loyalty has its domestic, its religious, its commercial, its professional forms, and many other forms as well. The essence of it, whatever forms it may take, is, as I conceive the matter, this: Since no man can find a plan of life by merely looking within his own chaotic nature, he has to look without, to the world of social conventions, deeds, and causes. Now, a loyal man is one who has found, and who sees, neither mere individual fellow-men to be loved or hated, nor mere conventions, nor customs, nor laws to be obeyed, but some social cause, or some system of causes, so rich, so well knit, and, to him, so fascinating, and withal so kindly in its appeal to his natural self-will, that he says to his cause: Thy will is mine and mine is thine. In thee I do not lose but find myself, living intensely in proportion as I live for thee." If one could find such a cause, and hold it for his lifetime before his mind, clearly observing it, passionately loving it, and yet calmly understanding it, and steadily and practically serving it, he would have one plan of life, and this plan of life would be his own plan, his own will set before him, expressing all that his self-will has ever sought. Yet this plan would also be a plan of obedience, because it would mean living for the cause.

Now, in all ages of civilized life there have been people who have won in some form a consciousness of loyalty, and who have held to such a consciousness through life. Such people may or may not have been right in their choice of a cause. But at least they have exemplified through their loyalty one feature of a rational moral life. They have known what it was to have unity of purpose.

And again, the loyal have known what it was to be free from moral doubts and scruples. Their cause has been their conscience. It has told them what to do. They have listened and obeyed, not because of what they took to be blind convention, not because of a fear of external authority, not even because of what seemed to themselves any purely private and personal intuition, but because, when they have looked first outwards at their cause, and then inwards at themselves, they have found themselves worthless in their own eyes, except when viewed as active, as confidently devoted, as willing instruments of their cause. Their cause has forbidden them to doubt; it has said: "You are mine, you cannot do otherwise." And they have said to the cause: "I am, even of my own will, thine. I have no will except thy will. Take me, use me, control me, and even thereby fulfill me and exalt me." That is again the speech of the devoted patriots, soldiers, mothers, and martyrs of our race. They have had the grace of this willing, this

active loyalty.

Now, people loyal in this sense have surely existed in the world, and, as you all know, the loyal still exist amongst us. And I beg you not to object to me, at this point, that such devoted people have often been loyal to very bad causes; or that different people have been loyal to causes which were in deadly war with one another, so that loyal people must often have been falsely guided. I beg you, above all, not to interpose here the objection that our modern doubters concerning moral problems simply cannot at present see to what one cause they ought to be loyal, so that just herein, just in our inability to see a fitting and central object of loyalty, lies the root of our modern moral confusion and distraction. All those possible objections are indeed perfectly fair considerations. I shall deal with them in due time ; and I am just as earnestly aware of them as you can be. But just now we are getting our first glimpse of our future philosophy of loyalty. All that you can say of the defects of loyalty leaves still untouched the one great fact that, if you want to find a way of living which surmounts doubts, and centralizes your powers, it must be some such a way as all the loyal in common have trodden, since first loyalty was known amongst men. What form of loyalty is the right one, we are hereafter to see. But unless you can find some sort of loyalty, you cannot find unity and peace in your active living. You must find, then, a cause that is really worthy of the sort of devotion that the soldiers, rushing cheerfully to certain death, have felt for their clan or for their country, and that the martyrs have shown on behalf of their faith. This cause must be indeed rational, worthy, and no object of a false devotion. But once found, it must become your conscience, must tell you the truth about your duty, and must unify, as from without and from above, your motives, your special ideals, and your plans. You ought, I say, to find such a cause, if in deed there be any ought at all. And this is my first hint of our moral code. But you repeat, perhaps in bewilderment, your question: Where, in our distracted modern world, in this time when cause wars with cause, and when all old moral standards are remorselessly criticized and doubted, are we to find such a cause a cause, all-embracing, definite, rationally compelling, supreme, certain, and fit to centralize life? What cause is there that for us would rationally justify a martyr's devotion?" I reply: "A perfectly simple consideration, derived from a study of the very spirit of loyalty itself, as this spirit is manifested by all the loyal, will soon furnish to us the unmistakable answer to this question." For the moment we have won our first distant glimpse of what I mean by the general nature of loyalty, and by our common need of loyalty....

Your very loyalty to your own cause will tend to prove infectious. Whoever is loyal to his own therefore helps on the cause of universal loyalty by his every act of devotion, precisely in so far as he refrains from any hostile attack upon the loyalty of other people, and simply lets his example of loyalty work. Whoever makes the furtherance of universal loyalty his cause, lacks, therefore, neither practical means nor present opportunity for serving his cause.

To each man our principle therefore says: Live in your own way a loyal life and one subject to the general principle of loyalty to loyalty. Serve your own cause, but so choose it and so serve it that in consequence of your life loyalty amongst men shall prosper. For tune may indeed make the range of your choice of your calling very narrow. Necessity may bind you to an irksome round of tasks. But sweeten these with whatever loyalty you can consistently get into your life. Let loyalty be your pearl of great price. Sell all the happiness that you possess or can get in disloyal or in non-loyal activities, and buy that pearl. When you once have found, or begun to find, your personal cause, be as steadily faithful to it as loyalty to loyalty henceforth permits. That is, if you find that a cause once chosen does indeed involve disloyalty to loyalty, as one might find who, having sworn fidelity to a leader, afterwards discovered his leader to be a traitor to the cause of mankind, you may have altogether to abandon the cause first chosen. But never abandon a cause except for the sake of some higher or deeper loyalty such as actually

requires the change.

Meanwhile, the principle of loyalty to loyalty obviously requires you to respect loyalty in all men, wherever you find it. If your fellow's cause has, in a given case, assailed your own, and if, in the world as it is, conflict is inevitable, you may then have to war with your fellow's cause, in order to be loyal to your own. But even then, you may never assail whatever is sincere and genuine about his spirit of loyalty. Even if your fellow's cause involves disloyalty to mankind at large, you may not condemn the loyalty of your fellow in so far as it is loyalty. You may condemn only his blindly chosen cause. All the loyal are brethren. They are children of one spirit. Loyalty to loyalty involves the active furtherance of this spirit wherever it appears. Fair play in sport, chivalrous respect for the adversary in war, tolerance of the sincere beliefs of other men, all these virtues are thus to be viewed as mere variations of loyalty to loyalty. Prevent the conflict of loyal ties when you can, minimize such conflict where it exists, and, by means of fair play and of the chivalrous attitude towards the opponent, utilize even conflict, where it is inevitable, so as to further the cause of loyalty to loyalty. Such maxims are obvious consequences of our principle. Do we not gain, then, a great deal from our principle in the way of unifying our moral code?

But next, as to those just-mentioned paradoxes of popular morality, do we not gain from our principle a guide to help us through the maze? "Be just; but also be kind." These two precepts, so far as they are sound, merely emphasize, as we pointed out at the close of our last lecture, two distinct but inseparable aspects of loyalty. My cause links my fellow and myself by social ties which, in the light of our usual human interpretation of life, appear to stand for super-personal interests, for interests in property rights, in formal obligations, in promises, in various abstractly definable relations. If I am loyal, I respect these relations. And I do so since, from the very definition of a cause to which one can be loyal, this cause will become nothing unless these ties are preserved intact. But to respect relations as such is to be what men call just. Meanwhile, our common cause also personally interests both my fellow and myself. So far as we both know the cause, we love it, and delight in it. Hence in being loyal to our cause, I am also being kind to my fellow. For hereby I further his delight in just so far as I help him to insight. But kindness which is not bound up with loyalty is as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal, a mere sentimentalism. And abstract justice, apart from loyalty, is a cruel formalism. My fellow wants to be loyal. This is his deepest need. If I am loyal to that need, I therefore truly delight him. But kindness that is not bound up with loyalty may indeed amuse my fellow for a moment. Yet like "fancy," such kindness "dies in the cradle where it lies." Even so, if I am loyal, I am also just. But justice that is no aspect of loyalty has no reason for existence. The true relations of benevolence and justice can therefore be best defined in terms of our conception of loyalty. If anyone says, "I will show thee my justice or my kindness without my loyalty," the loyal man may rightly respond, "I will show thee my kindness and my justice by my loyalty."

In a similar fashion, the moral problems regarding the right relations of strictness to generosity, of prudent foresight to present confidence, of self-surrender to self-assertion, of love to the righteous resistance of enemies, — all these moral problems, I say, are best to be solved in terms of the principle of loyalty to loyalty. As to the problem of the true concern and regard for the self, the loyal man cultivates himself, and is careful of his property rights, just in order to furnish to his cause an effective instrument; but he aims to forget precisely so much of himself as is, at any time, an obstruction to his loyalty; and he also aims to be careless of whatever about his private fortunes may be of no importance to his service of the cause. When he asserts himself, he does so because he has neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak save as his cause commands; and it is of precisely such self-sacrificing self-assertion that the foes of his cause would do well to beware. All the paradoxes about the care of self and the abandonment of

self are thus soluble in terms of loyalty. Whoever knows and possesses the loyal attitude, ipso facto solves these paradoxes in each special case as it arises. And whoever comprehends the nature of loyalty to loyalty, as it is expressed in the form of fair play in sport, of chivalry in war, of tolerance in belief, and of the spirit that seeks to prevent the conflict of loyalties where such prevention is possible, whoever, I say, thus comprehends what loyalty to loyalty means, holds the key to all the familiar mysteries about the right relation of the love of man to the strenuous virtues, and to the ethics of conflict.

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